

what level of monthly or annual drug expenditure they incur and does not abandon seniors when they need help the most.

The House of Representatives narrowly passed a prescription drug bill that subsidizes the insurance industry and attempts to ensure coverage in all areas of the country—a difficult if not impossible task. The biggest problem with this approach is that the insurance industry has stated that it wouldn't be able or willing to provide these types of "stand alone" policies no matter how much of a subsidy they receive. Trying to establish an enormously expensive and administratively difficult plan built on the mere hope that the insurance industry will change its mind, is simply too big a risk to take when it comes to our nations seniors.

The House bill would establish a new outside agency through the Department of Health and Human Services to administer the plan. Not only will this compound the problem of administration, implementation and increasing federal bureaucracy, but it also actually delays benefits that will help our seniors today. There is no way a major new bureaucracy can be created and become effective in time to provide the help our seniors need now. At a minimum, based on similar initiatives in the past, it would take two years to gear up this kind of new government agency, which again, only duplicates existing federal bureaucracy and slows progress toward meaningful reform.

It's important these facts are understood as we continue discussing emerging plans for a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. How a plan is structured could have dramatic consequences for future innovations in treatments which can enhance quality of life and in some cases save lives. If done right, we'll enable all senior citizens to access the best health care system in the world and receive the latest technology and treatment for their conditions—and do it in a way that is both responsible and expedient. MEDS accomplishes both of these goals.

In closing Mr. President, let me say, as I have in the past, the challenge before us today is to enable Medicare to shape and adapt itself to reflect the realities of an ever changing health care system. After 35 years of endless tinkering, we have a real opportunity to make it more responsive, more helpful, and more attuned to the needs of current and future retirees and disabled persons in this country through the provision of a prescription drug benefit. This is a goal to which I am wholly committed.

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD ACT

Mr. L. CHAFEE. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate approved S. 148, the

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. I would like to thank Senator ABRAHAM and Senator SMITH for their work on this important environmental issue, and also offer my family's appreciation for Senator ABRAHAM's kind words regarding my father. Senator John Chafee was a strong proponent of this legislation, and I am proud to follow his lead in cosponsoring this bill.

Now, what is a neotropical migratory bird? Simply put, it's a bird that breeds in North America, and migrates each year to tropical habitats in Central and South America. While the name sounds technical and complicated, many of these birds are well-known and well-loved by Americans. Plovers, sandpipers, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, orioles, blackbirds, and many species of raptor and songbird are all neotropical migratory birds. Some of these birds, such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and the Killdeer, cover amazing distances as they travel between their summer and winter habitats.

In Rhode Island, we are fortunate to be visited by many neotropical migrants including one species of hummingbird, over ten species of raptor, over 30 species of shorebirds, eight species of flycatcher, six species of thrush, and 35 species of warblers. Rhode Island's location makes it a key stopover spot for many neotropical migrants to refuel and rehydrate.

In addition to an excellent location, Rhode Island has important habitat for migratory birds. Its combination of fruit-bearing shrubs and forest provide ample cover and food for these birds to take a break during their migration. The many wetlands found in the state also provide excellent areas to rehydrate, one of the most important needs on a bird's trip north or south.

Even with high quality habitat still available in parts of the United States, tragically, many of these species are in real danger. The greatest human threat to neotropical migratory birds is the loss of habitat, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America. Many neotropical migratory birds stop to rest and feed at several relatively small patches of habitat along their long migrations between continents. Destruction of these stopover areas can have a devastating impact on a species. In addition, overharvesting of timber, loss of wetlands and heavy use of pesticides exact a heavy toll on the habitats on which neotropical migrants depend. As noted in the Committee Report, 90 species of migratory birds are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and approximately 210 species in the United States are in serious decline.

The challenge of protecting migratory birds is complicated by the reality that many of the most effective conservation measures must be implemented overseas. Migratory birds cross

oceans, time zones, and national boundaries. Preservation of these species must involve close partnerships and cooperation with our Caribbean and South American neighbors.

Senator ABRAHAM's bill will help address the multitude of threats facing migratory birds by encouraging partnerships between private and public entities and across international boundaries to help protect and restore habitat of neotropical migrants. Importantly, there are ongoing efforts aimed at stopping the decline in migratory bird species; however, these efforts could be enhanced through better coordination and increased funding. S. 148 furthers both goals. Under the bill, the Secretary of the Interior is directed to facilitate the exchange of information among the various groups, and to coordinate existing conservation efforts. The bill also authorizes \$25 million over five years in grants for projects to conserve neotropical migratory bird populations. Three-quarters of this funding must be used for projects in other countries to ensure that scarce resources will be focused where they are needed most.

In closing, I would like to relate a story that my father used to tell about a family friend traveling in China. This fellow noticed that his surroundings there were strangely silent. Upon reflection, he attributed the ominous quiet to the total lack of birds in the environment. Apparently, in parts of China the destruction of habitat and the commercial bird market have resulted in the virtual elimination of songbirds. What a terrible loss. We must work together to prevent such tragedy from occurring in the Western Hemisphere. And, Senator ABRAHAM's bill is a good step in the right direction. I applaud my colleagues for supporting this measure to help prevent the further decline in our neotropical migratory birds. And, I hope the President will act swiftly to enact the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, June 29, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,645,427,846,938.37 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-five billion, four hundred twenty-seven million, eight hundred forty-six thousand, nine hundred thirty-eight dollars and thirty-seven cents).

One year ago, June 29, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,640,577,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred forty billion, five hundred seventy-seven million).

Fifteen years ago, June 29, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,798,529,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred ninety-eight billion, five hundred twenty-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, June 29, 1975, the Federal debt stood at